

**ABSTRACT**

A protection circuit couples to and protects a battery cell. The protection circuit generally limits the current that can flow through cell when the voltage across the cell falls to a predetermined minimum threshold, such as might occur if the cell is passivated, fails in service, or is reaching the end of its useful life. The protection circuit preferably includes a transistor, which couples in series with the cell and limits the current therethrough. By limiting the current through the cell when its voltage reaches a minimum threshold, the voltage on the cell will not fall below the minimum safe level. A bypass means (e.g., a diode) also is included to conduct current around the cell when its current has been limited by the transistor.

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